



Cervical Cancer ...

What Women Need to Know

What are the signs of cervical cancer?

- Bleeding or spotting from your vagina that isn't normal or isn't from your period
- Other abnormal discharge from your vagina
- Bleeding after you've had sex
- Pain during sex
- Pain and these general symptoms are usually late signs of cervical cancer

What adds to my risk of getting cervical cancer?

- The risk of cervical cancer is closely linked to viruses called HPV (Human Papillomavirus). These viruses can be spread during sex. They can cause genital warts and can increase cervical cancer risk, but most women with HPV never have a cancer.
- Women also add to their risk if they:
 - ~ have sex at an early age
 - ~ have sex with multiple partners
 - ~ have sex with a partner who has had many sexual partners
 - ~ smoke cigarettes

How can I detect cervical cancer early?

- Get a Pap test from a health care professional.
- The health care professional will gently remove a small sample of cells from your cervix.
- The sample will be checked under a microscope.
- You should get a Pap test once a year with a pelvic exam (recto-vaginal) if you:
 - ~ Are sexually active or
 - ~ Are at least 18 years old
- If your Pap tests show no signs of cancer or precancerous changes after three straight years or more, your health care professional will decide whether to give you the Pap test less often.

How do you treat cervical cancer?

- If your health care professional finds precancerous changes in your cervix that may lead to cancer, they may destroy the harmful cells with extreme cold (called cryotherapy) or extreme heat (called electrosurgical excision or LEEP). They can also remove the harmful cells with lasers or surgery.
- If cervical cancer is found, doctors use surgery, radiation and/or chemotherapy to treat it. Your treatment options depend on how far along the cancer is.

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What are my chances of surviving cervical cancer?

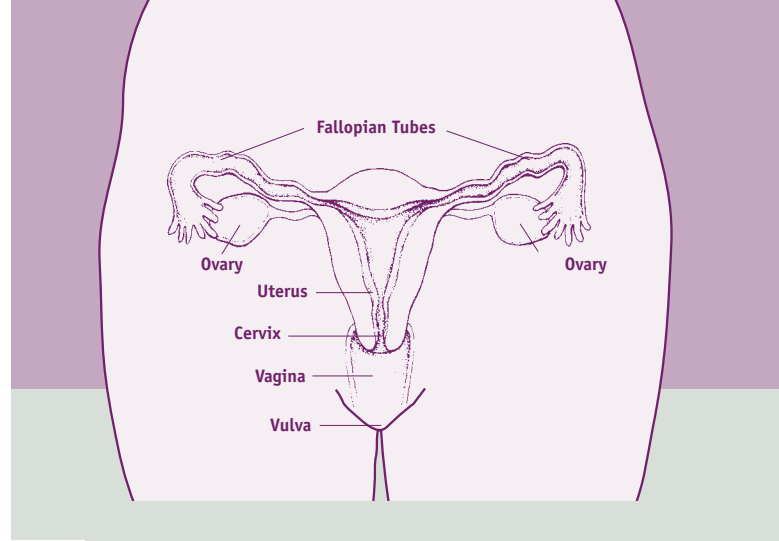
- Proper treatment can stop nearly all cervical cancer that remains in the cervix.
- Nearly nine out of 10 women (89 percent) who have cervical cancer spreading beyond the cervix survive one year after cancer is found. Seven out of 10 women (70 percent) survive five years.
- Treatment of early cervical cancer (that has not spread outside the cervix) is very effective. Nine out of 10 women (91 percent) survive at least five years.

How many women will get cervical cancer this year?

The California Cancer Registry estimates that 1,760 new cases of cervical cancer will be diagnosed in California women in the year 2000.



Women should begin yearly pap tests at age 18 or when they first become sexually active. If a women has three negative annual pap tests in a row, it may be done less often at the judgement of the health care professional.



Across the nation and in California, the rate of developing cervical cancer is almost twice as high for African-American and Hispanic women as it is for white women.

Pap tests are extremely good in finding cervical cancer early. As more and more women have Pap tests, health care professionals have found many more cancers in the early stages than in the late stages.

The California Cancer Registry estimates that 490 women in California will die from cervical cancer this year.

Source: California Cancer Registry (CDHS/CSS)

American Cancer Society Cancer Facts & Figures 2000

Additional copies of this pamphlet may be downloaded at Department of Health Services—Office of Women's Health web site: www.dhs.ca.gov/director/owh or obtained by fax at (916) 653-3535.

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